

Message Text

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PAGE 01 CAIRO 13464 231637Z
ACTION NEA-11

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E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: PINT EG
SUBJECT: SADAT "EXPLAINS" REFERENDUM

REF: CAIRO 13381

SUMMARY: SADAT UNUSUALLY INEPT AT MAY 24 PRESS CONFERENCE, BREAKING NO NEW GROUND AND OFFENDING FOREIGN PRESS CORPS. COURT HAS REFUSED OVERTURN REFERENDUM RESULTS. LEFT PARTY MANIFESTO REFERRED TO MILITARY PROSECUTOR. PRESS CONTINUES PRAISE REFERENDUM AND ATTACK WAFD, LEFT, AND FORMER AHARAM EDITOR MUHAMMAD HAYKAL. END SUMMARY.

1. SADAT ASSEMBLED FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS AND LEADING EGYPTIAN JOURNALISTS AND WRITERS MAY 23 FOR OVER TWO HOUR "PRESS CONFERENCE" TO EXPLAIN REFERENDUM. CONFERENCE WAS, MOST UNUSUALLY, ALL IN ARABIC AND ONLY THREE QUESTIONS ASKED. SADAT'S INTRODUCTORY REMARKS STATING REFERENDUM FOR, NOT AGAINST, DEMOCRACY, LASTED 20 MINUTES, BUT ADDED LITTLE TO WHAT ALREADY IN PUBLIC DOMAIN. ANSWER TO INITIAL QUESTION FROM EGYPTIAN
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PAGE 02 CAIRO 13464 231637Z

REPORTER WENT ON FOR ANOTHER HOUR AND WAS EQUALLY UNINFORMATIVE. ON PYRAMIDS PLATEAU PROJECT, SADAT SAID IT IN HANDS OF SALEM COMMISSION AND ANYONE WITH CHARGES SHOULD TAKE THEM THERE. SADAT SAID HE HAD "TOLERATED" AL AHALI FOR FOUR MONTHS AND PEOPLE HAVE NOW SEEN HOW BAD IT IS (IMPLYING IT MAY BE CLOSED). MAJORITY OF WESTERN JOURNALISTS WALKED OUT AFTER HOUR AND HALF, WHILE

SADAT WAS STILL TALKING. NO MENTION OF FOREIGN POLICY MATTERS.

2. COURTS. CAIRO COURT OF FIRST INSTANCE MAY 22 SAID IT LACKED JURISDICTION TO OVERTURN REFERENDUM. WAFDIST REPORTEDLY ASKED COURT RULE PLEBISCITE ILLEGAL SINCE SIX PRINCIPLES PROTECTED BY EXISTING LAW. AT SAME TIME, PRESS REPORTS HEAD OF SUPREME MILITARY COURT, BRIG. GEN. MOKHTAR SHEBAN HAS LODGED COMPLAINT WITH MILITARY PROSECUTOR AGAINST LEFT PARTY FOR MAILING HIM COPY OF PARTY'S MANIFESTO OPPOSING REFERENDUM.

3. EDITORIALY, PRESS CONTINUES PRAISE REFERENDUM'S OUTCOME (WHICH WAS ALSO MAIN STORY ALL DAILIES MAY 23). OF PARTICULAR INTEREST ARE ATTACKS ON WAFD AND FORMER AHRAH MDITOR MUHAMMAD HAYKAL IN AKHBAR BASED UPON DECLASSIFIED USG DOCUMENTS FROM 1948 TO 1950. PAPER USED THESE TO DEMONSTRATE WAFD WAS IN COLLUSION WITH BRITISH, WHILE HAYKAL WAS INFORMANT OF U.S. AMBASSADOR, PASSING ON "EGYPTIAN SECRETS." PAPER CLAIMED HAYKAL LATER FILLED SAME ROLE FOR SOVIETS.

4. COMMENT: SADAT'S PERFORMANCE AT PRESS CONFERENCE WAS UNUSUALLY INEPT. HE ARRIVED AN HOUR AND A HALF LATE, APPARENTLY IRRITABLE AND TESTY, AND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 CAIRO 13464 231637Z

INSISTED ON SPEAKING ARABIC, EVEN IN RESPONSE TO THE ONE QUESTION ASKED BY FOREIGN JOURNALIST. MATTHEWS

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